



It's All About Families

California WIC Family Centered Education

What is Family Centered Education in WIC?

- Parents and children having fun learning **together** about nutrition
- Parents helping their children get ready for school while at WIC
- Parents interacting with children in a positive way, building parenting skills

Why is Family Centered Education Important for WIC?

WIC Families Need Support for School Readiness. Nationwide, children who qualify for WIC enter school with below average school readiness skills including naming colors, letter and number recognition, and the ability to write their own name. Most low-income children enter first grade having experienced only 25 hours of one-to-one picture book reading compared to the 1000 -1700 hours that most middle income children receive. Nearly two-thirds of low-income families owned no books at all for their children.

A recent study of 500 WIC families from an agency in Los Angeles, California suggested similar barriers that WIC families face:

- Less than 10% read to their children on daily basis
- The majority had fewer than 5 books at home
- Most WIC parents thought school was the place to learn, not the home
- Most WIC parents did not think early childhood learning was important to school success

WIC Can Help. Reading to young children helps their brain development. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends reading aloud daily to children starting at 6 months old. Studies show that mothers on welfare are eight times more likely to read to their children if they are given books and encouragement. And school readiness is more than reading--- a child needs social, mathematical, and motor skills too. WIC can offer nutrition books and other nutrition education activities to help children get ready for school and to promote good nutrition habits for a lifetime.

Family Centered Education supports parents as the child's first teacher. It offers opportunities for *normalizing*---parents see that others face similar challenges and opportunities for *modeling*--- parents see positive family interactions.

How California WIC Family Centered Education Works:

Group education takes place at the WIC center as part of the WIC services. In California, group nutrition education sessions tend to be 20-30 minutes long. Children of all ages often come with their parents to the WIC appointment, and these children usually attend classes with their parents. Group sizes can range from 5-30 people per session, depending upon the WIC agency. The teaching method can vary too, from presentation to discussion to hands-on activities, depending upon the topic.

Good nutrition education involves all WIC participants in the learning process. In Family Centered Education, we engage parents and children together in learning activities while acknowledging the important role that families play in the growth and development of their children.

FCE is an effective way to teach families about nutrition as well as help them get ready for school. During 2000-2002, California WIC successfully field-tested and pilot-tested Family Centered Education lesson plans for group education: Grocery Shopping with Families, Grow Your Own Garden and Five a Day. Families enjoyed the interaction and staff felt that teaching this way was rewarding.

FCE is going statewide. In 2003, WIC is preparing for statewide implementation and encouraging pilot agencies to expand services more family centered activities. We are also exploring community partnerships.

Examples of WIC Family Centered Education Activities:

- Playing songs about nutrition such as "Dirt Made My Lunch"
- Reading a nutrition picture book such as "How are You Peeling?"
- Doing a hands on, container gardening activity
- Putting together grocery shopping survival bags to take to the store
- Counting the fruits and vegetables that the children like to eat
- Practicing educational games to play at the supermarket; other take home learning

Catch the Fun!



**WIC Families Get
Ready For School**

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